

POETRY CONTEST WINNER

Jed Myers

Beach Roses

Maybe it was that I saw lightning flicker
in the great gray mass of cloud the pilot called
some weather to the north as we sped up and lifted

uncannily-as-ever off, that got me
seeing the crash ahead. A first after all
these years riding such improbable sky-hoppers

without much forethought. Maybe it was
just my getting older – losing hair, height,
friends, the rough rhythm of funerals picking up –

that sparked the vision, as we veered toward the strobe
in its shroud of storm, of our drawn-out collision
and break-up, all of us and our beastly craft,

on the long ground of seasons to come,
the wreckage spread out on a rocky unmeant landing
strip of crags, cancers, strokes, overdoses,

aortic ruptures, skulls cracked on steering wheels,
and our rocketing raft's metal fatigue,
the scrapping of its carbon-spitting engines, collapse

of the empire and its control towers, its stinking
forges.... As the plane came level
at thirty-two-thousand feet, I saw a band of red

light on an obsidian edge, and thought
the rest of my breaths would be a little less desperate
if I could remember, remember we've been plowing

endlessly into the end. I'd hurtle home
to my love's arms, let the city night rumble
inside and around us, let us fall apart

as our hold fails, as these old muscles give out
and bones go so porous they'll snap like dry sticks,
as the crash tumbles and takes us down

and down to the sand the surf pounds –
let us, went my embarrassed fool prayer
like a radio broadcast I imagined out

to the spinning of chaos everywhere, let us possibly
remember, the terrible accident of our going
to powder, your panics and torn-up knee,

my memory lapses and languor, the fits we throw
hard as Jerusalem's stones at each other,
the wars we were born through, these are the opening

flower, our love's erupting bloom. I saw them
all in that blood color on the horizon
from my seat on Flight 23, speeding home

in one instant of the explosion, those beach roses
bursting forth out of the crests of dark dunes,
and those were our rosy children, blood's blossoms

grown of the debris we leave of ourselves.
I prayed to know it so damn well I'd have set it
fast in my soul, but I'd land and forget it.